



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

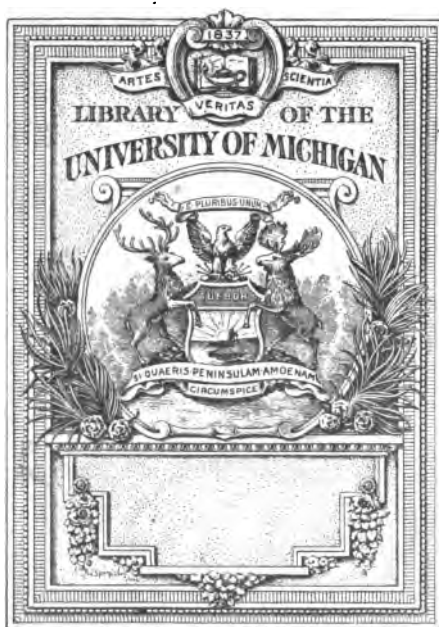
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





8.22.8
D924h

HYLLU'S

H Y L L U S

:: A D R A M A ::

BY RALPH CHEEVER DUNNING

LONDON : JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD

NEW YORK : JOHN LANE COMPANY MCMX

Turnbull & Spears, Printers, Edinburgh

FOREWORD

FOR the purpose of this drama, the legend of Hyllus will be as follows : He is the son of Heracles and Dejanira and is heir to the Spartan lands, but while yet a child he is driven out by King Eurystheus. He wanders northward with his mother, who reminds him always of his lost kingdom, which he must win back. He grows to manhood among northern tribes and his fellow exiles, and goes upon piratical cruises in search of treasure and to collect an army. Becoming betrothed to Iole, he makes sacrifice to her instead of Aphrodite. Because of this the goddess afflicts him with a desire for impossible things, so that he does not defend himself from Echemus, a Greek warrior,

v

whom King Eurystheus has sent out to kill him.

The scene is before a small temple of Poseidon, on a promontory.

CHARACTERS

HYLLUS.

DEJANIRA.

ZEUS.

APHRODITE.

Priest.

ECHEMUS.

IOLÉ.

Oreads.

Nereids.

Dryads.

HYLLUS

A

HYLLUS

PRIEST.

Who are these moving as one moves in heaven ?

OREADS.

A god likewise a goddess walk this way
And fear runs on before and waves the grass—
A wind, a wind and wild airs not of earth.

PRIEST.

Ah now I know them and the face of each.
I, too, was once as these when furtive Spring
White-footed in the vales, lit timid fires
Touching the tender points of buds and grass
With sweet excited fingers and quick lips

Till each a torch grew and erected flame
Whereof the travelling flush and merging
bloom

Made air of all my bones, nor any fear
Befell of ones too white for mortal : now
My knees betray me and mine eyes go blind
Beholding these and take a hurt thereof
Being kinless and no more the god I was.
Alas ! the lost youth that would see wide-eyed
These that mine age must blink at and be
dumb !

Surely the shining man that moves is Zeus
Abroad upon the earth unto some end
Touching a matter of mortality
They know not in the dateless dream of gods
But deem it sweet and seek it, being strange.
What shall be said now of that other one ?

Howbeit I know her by a creeping spine
And curdled blood and sweatings of my skin :
Yea she that walks from inland as a girl
Made woman by no hand of time or change
She is that Cytherean that I knew
Always, with shadowing smiles to know her by
Not to be hid for any guise of grace
Less than the wonder that she always was :
Lo how a goddess like a woman is
Which being woman were not less an one.
Alas the lost youth that she will not give,
Alas the spring that bred it and fled wings
Of all the hours whereof there is no one
That will grow tender and come back again—
O scattered and frightened Oreads, ye that peer
Out of white brakes with whiter-blossom face
Bird-eyed and startled in thy middle song

By these whereof I face what shall befall,
Strong in oblations unto him I serve
Whereby my knees are stiffened but to think,
Have ye beheld before two gods at once ?

OREADS.

Never : now do mine eyes see prodigies.

PRIEST.

Maybe they shall declare themselves in speech,
And the last word be said of all our woe
More than the doubtful speech of oracles
Born of a smoke and fearful fume of earth.

OREADS.

Hast thou a woe, save age, to make thee weep ?
I do not know thy woe nor any grief.

PRIEST.

Hush, ere these gods shall smite thy lawless
lips.

APHRODITE.

What do ye gazing on the realm Poseidon ?
Come, wilt thou nod or I entreat twice over ?

ZEUS.

Enthroned in cloud and compassed close with
awe,
Invisible save by mine attributes,
Beheld most terrible in upper airs
Uncleft by wings save where mine eagles
dream
And worshipped by the toiling tribe of men,
A topmost god and secondary fate,
Yet have I plagues to watch me while I eat.

O Aphrodite while thy lips can ask
What but the nodding of my head can grant
I shall not yet be named a stiff-necked god.

APHRODITE.

Who hath entreated thee as I entreated ?
A boon well asked should be a boon well given.
Shame on thy sleep ! Art thou a god and
gracious
That thou wouldst drowse before my waking
vengeance ?
What shall I promise more to thy compliance ?
Wilt thou take now persuasion of my kisses ?

OREADS.

How great the gift is that her kiss would get.

ZEUS.

What gift is this that clamours so to grant ?

APHRODITE.

Give me a dream whereby to plague a mortal
Who hath refused the tribute of a dove.

ZEUS.

Appear thou as thou art, and break his sleep.

APHRODITE.

He would find peace upon some lesser maiden
And all my vengeance die between two kisses.
A sharper shaft I crave for his disquiet.

ZEUS.

Thy tender worship, who is it hath scorned
That thou shouldst plot so thickly 'gainst his
peace ?

APHRODITE.

A landless exile hath neglected me

And laid his gifts afield on lesser altars,
On lesser altars he hath laid his gifts.

OREADS.

Lo now she weeps before the face of Zeus.
How dear the tears are when a goddess weeps !

ZEUS.

Get thou thy help of Hades to this end,
And make thy prayer to dim gods underground.

APHRODITE.

A subtler ill I crave than cursed Orestes.
Let him be plagued with visions not to be,
And lured to evil by a seeming good.

ZEUS.

Infect him by the white skin of a nymph

Half-seen by fountains in a mist of flowers.
Even such is madness made of to a man.

APHRODITE.

Alas the counter charm of Artemis
Malign to me and of a dateless anger
Defends from death and lesser ill of vengeance
This way-faring blasphemer of mine altar.
Whereby to me come tears and deep repining
And nightly but one thought of me so thwarted
Provokes to anguish of a slighted maiden
My heart despoiled so of a thousand triumphs.
Whence this cold queen and colder eyed
Athena

Usurp the licence of my rites in Hellas
By the one instance of a sweet apostate
Who puts this spite upon me though I weep.

PRIEST.

How do the gods contend upon a mortal ?
There is some fate above them they know not.

ZEUS.

Hath Artemis a new Endymion ?

APHRODITE.

Nay for mere hate of me she keeps his slumbers
And hath no more of him but piety.

ZEUS.

This is a wild fate that ye would for him.
Let me not serve injustice to the least.

APHRODITE.

Is not the slight a sad one he hath done ?

ZEUS.

It is in sooth a slight that gods ill brook:

APHRODITE.

Give me a dream then for my subtle vengeance.

PRIEST.

Alas to ones earth-born that spite the gods,
Ever the old cry and an end to them.

ZEUS.

I dream now, and my dream is white and red.

APHRODITE.

Dream as thou wilt of me and prove it truth,
I shall not flee thy fingers or thy lips
Nor aught of thee so fiery but I quench it.
Upon this hollow hill the growth is gracious :
Come ye and prove thy god-head and thy
dream.

OREADS.

I fear the fire to come of this encounter.

ZEUS.

Thou hast thy will so I but have thee now
Forthright in all thy whiteness as I would.

APHRODITE.

Come as thou wilt, I fear no fire of thine.

OREADS.

Is it the sky hath gloomed as a pall to their
pleasure ?

Yea, for a cloud hath covered the sun ere they
kiss.

I see now the god stride down great-limbed
to the treasure,

Claimed for the nonce by a crime and a com-
pact with Dis.

Will she wait in the dusk or flee like a nymph
to her fountain

The advancing delight of her flesh ere the tide
be at flood ?

Large-eyed is the god like a bull, with locks like
a well-wooded mountain.

Quickly he cometh in strength as a war-horse
snuffing the blood,

The old time begetter of kings, a god as no
gods were before him,

Surely her eyes shall behold and be closed like
those of a maid ;

Surely her eyes shall close though her lips shall
adore him—

Nay, for the gods are great nor fear though the
fauns be afraid.

Shining she is like a light, and standing she
burneth

Upright like a torch he shall take as he would
to his hands,

Like a fire on Parnassus by night when Bacchus
returneth

To the place of his rearing to revel so now like
a pillar she stands.

Quickly he cometh and strong, but she waits
not his coming,

And runneth a fire to a fire in a heat and haste
to embrace.

Lo now a spell on my sight and a wonder
benumbing

Weaveth a cloud more close so I see not the
white of her grace,

Nor the strength that withstands as a rock to
the rush of an ocean

Her beauty that bends to his will in the end
and recedes like a wave.

Only the tall mount shaketh and moveth the
earth with emotion,

Only the blackness is broken with cries as of
spirits that rave.

Will ye not have done ye two, must we burn
that behold ye embracing ?

Nay, we shall live for they cease at last lest the
world cry aloud,

Nay, for they stand yet loath with hair and
their hands interlacing,

Nay, for the dark drifts away, and the sun
leaps clear of the cloud.

ZEUS.

Injustice have I done, but not for naught.

B

OREADS.

I seek a faun to ease me of this sight.
I shall seduce a satyr for my peace,
Or tempt some shepherd on the slopes of Ossa.

APHRODITE.

Kingdoms are lost by lifting of a kirtle.
Lo by mine art and shortened breath of bliss
I win a vengeance sweeter than long loving.

PRIEST.

Ah but the tears that shall be shed for this.

APHRODITE.

Go weep ye, but I never weep for pity ;
I scent the sacrifice of doves in Corinth.

OREADS.

She is gone who but came as a cloud
But lives in mine eyes as wonder :

He is gone ere one crieth aloud

But lives in mine ears as thunder.

While still the stirred heavens are hushing

Their heights for the entrance of night,

Through mine ears rolls the noise of their
rushing,

Who have fled as a storm from my sight.

And I see how the grass she deemed gracious

Is wet as with dewfall and rain,

Though the pastureless fields and spacious

Of the skies have no shadow or stain.

I am moved as a memory moveth

Of dreams unfulfilled in the flesh,

I laugh and no horror behooveth,

I am caught by desire in a mesh.

Though the dream be of ivory portals

Or purely from gateways of horn

I will get me delight as of mortals,
I will love and be loved till the morn.
In fields where the reaper is resting,
On hills where the vine-dresser dwells,
All slopes of all mountain-tops breasting
Or brakes of the deep-lying dells,
I will seek till I find one that matches
My dream with a dream he hath known,
Till some shepherd pursueth and snatches
My hair that shall mix with his own
Among the shed leaves of the thicket
Hard pressed to the ground and prone
Till the finger of Eos shall prick it,
And the bubble of might be blown.

PRIEST.

These, too, are fled and like the call of birds
Unto their mates at dewfall, now their cries

Mix and are lost till that I hear them not.
Night rises and makes ready, and one star
Sheds light upon my spirit, and therewith
Now comes one mortal but immortal-eyed,
The maid Iole, she that Heracles
Moved at the promise of a still-shut bud
Reft as a child and burnt her father's house
To wait the maid's full-flowering as he might.
Him death has taken in a painful way :
Wherefor the hero Hyllus as a son
Inherits now what joy may come of her,
Albeit upon the salt and toilsome waves
He tarries longer than a bridegroom should.
Behold she waits him in a heat and thirst
Each night for but the memory of a kiss
Set lightly on a child's lips when he sailed.
Also some certain Nereids at this hour

1107 14

Slip upward from their caves and on dank rocks
Sit, and behold her with kind eyes and sing.

IOLE.

O dawn far off and night by night of pain !
What spells have stayed them or what monster
slain ?

O thou Poseidon of the stringy locks
How now thine anger all my longing mocks
That in the wind-cursed sadness of thy waves
May'st even now one more of many graves
Make deep to hide the ship in that I wait,
Unwitting of the more than golden freight
The too frail bottom bears above thy death.
Oh how mine eyes are misty and my breath
Half-held these many days to let them see
Upon this cliff, seems scarce to move in me.

And

Blameworthy waves, O sullen careless sea
My many prayers have they offended thee ?
Afar I see pale horses but no sail.
Alas the teen when hope goes first to fail.
I cannot bear to see the sun go now,
Too happy is the water's gold-kissed brow.

NEREIDS.

Child of the hills and inland ways
What canst thou know of the sea's own will ?
How can he hear thy pure-tongued praise
Or his foam-choked lips the wine ye spill,
How can they taste it ? Behold the days
Pass like the feet of a fear-shod wind
And the prayer of each one is of one that
sinned,
Who crieth to spare and not to kill.

How shall he hear thee among so many ?
Why should he hear thy prayer or any ?
Behold but now on the Carian coast
A maiden imploreth a windy war
So the ship of her lover shall fear to sail.
Pray well, O child, lest her prayer prevail,
And thy bed to-night bear a sea-born ghost
Who shall kiss thee cold as his dead lips are.
Implore not the sea sore vexed or serene :
Ye are life, he is death, with but fate between.

IOLE.

If ye know well the sea, go bear my prayer,
And say how now I die from long despair.

NEREIDS.

Sweet child, I love thee, but I cannot help,
No more than sea-weed or the sea-calf's whelp.

IOLE.

Swim out into the sunset, and there say
If any far-off prow yet points this way.

NEREIDS.

What bird's wing, or what cloud, or yet what
sail,
Shines leftward of the sunset's gilded vale ?

IOLE.

O see, mine eyes ; O wind, blow not my hair :
Let me but see ere night fall if not there
Comes all my wealth of waiting home to me.
One year, and each night have I watched the
sea,
And now may be he shall have praise to-night
And stars behold the hill-fires of delight.
O Aphrodite of the dear kissed lips,

O much loved queen, ere yet the last light slips
Let me be kissed by him I wait for now—
One kiss of meeting on a lifted brow
Nor warmer than they would who know not yet
If to one end the hearts of them be set.
Albeit, O goddess, that beholdeth hearts
Laid open in despite of any arts
To the last deeps where love or hate may be,
Doubtless thou knowest how it is with me.
Down the long gulf, out of the ocean-stream,
Dost thou to me not bring mine utter dream ?

NEREIDS.

Pray well, O child, to thy rose-red goddess,
O shepherdess crying across the sea,
What flocks are lost where the foam untrod is
Save a dream of the dawn that shall never
be ?

My cold heart warms to the woe of thy face :
O call me not cruel that I cry to thee
It were better thy lover were lost and tossed
Where the white-maned chargers arise and race
In some gulping hollow of outer water,
Lost as only the drowned are lost,
Yea many another not named to-day,
Ere yet in thy sun-kissed arms, O daughter,
He lay and used thee as lovers may.
Alas to thee and thy love star-crossed,
The sea-born nymphs have a song for thee
Who can see into time an hour and a day.
Who shall befriend thee ? O Aphrodite,
Abate thy spell in the heart of a boy !
Wilt thou be more hard than the haughty sea ?
We own thee sweet, we own thee mighty,
Wilt thou yet not hear ? O girl, thy joy

Shall be as a draught whose dregs are bitter,
To die outright in the end were fitter.

IOLÉ.

What song is this? Methought ye sang of woe,
But such the sea sings always high or low.
I dream now on my ship that cometh in—
That sails by early stars on paths akin
To what the gods use when they visit earth.
Oh all the world is beautiful with birth
Of soft successive stars, and one more fair
Shineth and soothes the too expectant air
That waits the moon not yet, who yet shall
 come
Soon, for the sky shines and the air grows
 dumb
Until the coming wonder of her face

Till the wind be over and rage be dead,
And I rise once more to my rocks and keep
A sun-lit vigil devoid of dread,
Or watch in the moon the sails come in
As now one comes from the isles of tin,
Or a mistier shore that I know not of
Bringing a lover unto his love.

IOLE.

O prayers fulfilled and faith set free of doubt !
Sweet girdled goddess, may all those that
flout

Thy rites or worship as I have not done
Be strange unto the free face of the sun :
Let stars becross them in their journeyings,
And madness goad to hell by hidden stings.

NEREIDS.

Laughter ringeth across the sky,
Beautiful laughter mixed with stars
Shivers and shimmers a wave on high :
Alas but malice the music mars,
Nothing therein but beauty and malice,
A poisoned wine in a golden chalice—
The sky is brimmed with it : drink and die.
Why should it come of a maiden's curse,
Rosy laughter athwart the night
Burning the heart out of all the world ?
Alas the omen, O goddess adverse,
Laugh less lightly, oh be less bright :
For the lives of thy worshippers racked and
whirled
Wilt thou not be sad in the midst of thy
might ?

Nay, not an hour though the heart of a maiden
Break, and a boy's heart die over-laden.
Blood on thy lips, alas the omen
Laughter of love and mercy for no men.

IOLE.

I saw the soundless lightning flush the night
Like singing through the soul of my delight.

NEREIDS.

A goddess's laughter, yea Aphrodite's,
Fell from afar to a kindred ear.
Ye saw not her face for mortal thy sight is,
Nay, and her laughter ye could not hear.
I saw, and the sight to man were madness ;
I heard, and the sound of her laugh is sadness.
My cold sea-heart is awork with woe.
Alas, poor maid, that I held too dear,

c

I would ye had never watched by the sea
So might I now not weep for thee—
I would forever it were not so.
Now will I sing farewell and sit
Desolate, deep in a weed-draped cavern,
I that can help thee never a whit.
Many that tipple in town and tavern
They drink in the end of the sea full deep,
But thy grief is greater than all of these.
Loud in their ears the water hummeth
But brief the passage to peaceful sleep.
Farewell, for behold thy lover cometh ;
Farewell, for to-night thy fate shall seize.

I OLE.

What fate walks hand in hand with love to-
night

That the sea's song is sad with utter blight ?
Three splashes and the nereids are no more,
Gone downward to the green sea's quiet core
And shoreward reaches lonesome for their song
Are silent and seem sad to walk along.
But I will wait now by the cliff-top path
His coming who but late hath slipped the
wrath

Of seas I know not, and the thought of me
Though yet not strong nor rooted utterly
May be in moon-light meeting face to face
Shall blossom and seem worthy to embrace.
Alas a goddess were not good enough,
How shall a shepherdess not seem too rough ?
O thou my god and lover of all things fair,
Let now strong love cast forth a favouring air
Till I to thee seem worthy of desire

As darker maidens of an older Tyre.
Now comes one singing from the sea elate,
And by the song I know him and await.

HYLLUS.

I have been glad in spring,
I shall be glad again
Though every bud shall bring
A memory of pain
And mar mine home-coming.

Let not thy tears betray
The innocence of grass,
Nor the clear face of day
Profane with one alas,
Since all alike shall pass.

O tender girls and tall
Afire with fresh delight,

This fire not yet shall fall

But last into the night,

And come unto thy call.

O brakes aburn with bloom

Thy flowers shall light her face,

Brown birds that sing in gloom

Oh they shall tell the place,

Wild harvest lands of Thrace.

Come find delight afield

Nigh frantic to be found,

Each grace is glad to yield

Each grove is holy ground,

O warrior leave thy shield.

O youth still in the leaf

Albeit more man than boy,

Though I weep not for grief

Yet I shall weep for joy
Each fiery fall of Troy.

IOLÉ.

Now shall the nightingales rejoice or die.
Alas, O Hyllus, wilt thou pass me by ?

HYLLUS.

What vision doth entreat me like a girl ?
How now thine eyes shine and thy parted lips
Seem pale to kiss for thou art half afraid.

IOLÉ.

Wilt thou not know me that awaited thee
One year this late spring night-time by the
sea ?

HYLLUS.

This is Iole come to womanhood

That was then fair and now is like a song
Embodied of all sweet things ever sung.

IOLÉ.

O bitter praise to whom thy lips forsake !
Wilt thou bear this my heart or shalt thou
break ?

PRIEST.

There is no limit set to agony.

HYLLUS.

My soul hath fed on wonders and expects
One wonder more of all unwondrous things
So cursed as with a longing to no end.

PRIEST.

The winds have touched thee with their dis-
content.

HYLLUS.

Not all the slain of all my piracies
Would plague me thus as this I know not of.

PRIEST.

Alas, I will not tell thee of thine end.
How shall one cheat the gods save but by
death ?

IOLÉ.

Many the ways men seek from fate release,
And some in some one love have found long
peace.

HYLLUS.

Art thou my peace ? What hast thou in thy
hands
That stretch toward my spirit with thy palms
Held upward as a suppliant asking gifts ?

What shall I give thee that I shall not take,
And wilt thou name the hope that saddens me ?
Albeit I sing as one that knoweth joy
Ever the night brings back my grief to me.
Art thou my peace ? I have not found it yet
Upon no journey that I left thee for
To find much treasure but no peace at all.
Art thou my peace at last ? O thou true heart,
Why art thou strengthless of all spells to stay
My soul from wonder ? World, O world too
wide,

O staring stars upon the moon-blest sea
And wide-winged night upon the waves thereof,
O quiet cove and whispering airs of spring
Abroad upon the sea and blessed land
So fair unto my feet and good to feel :
Faint lights upon the hill-side that I know

And thou, O girl, the body of all these,
Why shall I not be satisfied to love ?
What curse is it that makes thee be not fair
To me, thy lover of one year ago ?
Now shall there not be joy of equal edge
To match such tears of parting. But to think
What then thou wert and what thou art not
now

To me, that held thee whiter than all white
Or beautiful things in Hellas, dreaming thee
A goddess to be kissed and kissable
Makes strange to-night the earth unto my
feet.

How have I prayed thee, being apart and far,
Yea farther hence than many eagle flights.
Where all the home gods end and strange
begin

And prayer falls pointless lacking names to
call,

I made to thee an altar in a wood
Of holy pines and prayed so, and my prayer
Befell like peace to purge the nights of fear
Nor any beast grew bold and all wild gods
Restrained their wills from mischief : whence
my feet

Trod ever a good ground nor knew a snare.
This fell from but the naming of thy name,
A goddess then : likewise all lesser gods
And Artemis high-souled, had honour done.
But Aphrodite was not one of these :
Thou wert mine Aphrodite—unto thee
The white doves bled and higher thoughts
rose up

Beyond all flight or spirit of dead birds

Or smoke of incense : but I know thee not ;
Thou art not of my dream and hast no part
One with the aspiration that I know
New-born of all I thought thee. I have
dreamed

A whiter woman than the earth can bear
Whom once thou wert : but now to-night
I see

Thee as thou art, so standing in thy tears
A right sweet woman but no goddess now.
What spell hath come between us ? Speak
some word

So I shall know thee goddess ere I weep.

IOLÉ.

I can but tell thee how thou once did love
Me, whom thou makest now a stranger of.

HYLLUS.

Alas no stranger, but yet strange to me.

IOLE.

Hear now the rout that comes to welcome thee.

Unbend thy brows, make soft thine eyes for
once

Ere yet they come : but think the many suns

I stared at, Hyllus, like a hope that ends,

And no one but the nereids to be friends.

DRYADS.

Whom shall we praise for joy at heart of a
hero's returning

Out of Kimmerian lands and the sea ?

It is thou, O fair-haired Hestia, thou and thy
torch that is burning,

Thou, and thine hour shall have honour of
me.

The best that was lost from our land behold
now thou bringest

Bright from the sea laid smooth by thy spell.

O presence too pure to endure, yet stay for a
while ere thou wingest

Back to the place where thou choosest to
dwell.

Stay now thy soft yet too swift wings : bow
down and listen,

Hearken to hearts that implore thee and
praise.

Now ere the night gets strength while yet but
the large stars glisten,

Now ere thy feet be withdrawn from the
bays—

O bland and most blessed of hours truly thy
time is the best,

Yea, thou healest all hearts that behold
thee.

Better than Eos and hope, O Hestia, thou and
thy rest

When the following night shall enfold thee.

PRIEST.

How shall one pray against a fate that comes
Iron-footed, with no word and changeless eyes.

DEJANIRA.

What is thy grief? Hath not thy god had
honour?

The maid Iole hath appeased his lips
With wine for blood, and we that in time past
Implored Poseidon, thank a gentler god.

PRIEST.

Give thanks for little pleasure ere long pain.

DEJANIRA.

What snake hides in the shadow of thy words ?

Wilt thou portend an evil of my son ?

Save then thy words since I will not believe.

PRIEST.

No woman shall believe if she would not,

Or else she will believe it against God.

DEJANIRA.

Kiss me, my son : thou hast thy father's eyes.

I am thy mother, and got thee a god

To be thy sire : vex not thy soul for love

Of any other woman, for to-night

We stand upon the threshold of our fate

Together, and no love befits thee now
Save the cold love of kinship till thy sword
Hew off the head of that malicious king
Who sits upon thy land, defiling it.
Are we not exiles by an aged wrong,
Landless and without honour ? Once we stood
Less changeable than hills our heritage
Where now we last a time-worn memory.
The obscure root of rumour and of tales
And hopes and idle prophecies wherewith
A conquered people soothes captivity,
Till in the clear fulfilment of a dream
Thy sword brings daylight of a certain dawn,
Red with much bloodshed in an upright
cause.
Pursue not love nor laughter till that time.

D

HYLLUS.

Ye bid me do not what I cannot do,
Despite the will of the world should bend that
way

And all my will go with it. I would know
Why duty is made easy to my soul.

DEJANIRA.

May be some god hath thee in hand for this.

PRIEST.

No god, but yet a goddess to no good.

HYLLUS.

A bitter heart and cruel she hath toward me.

DRYADS.

Shall anyone think that cruelty thrives ?
Shall anyone say that sorrow is long ?

Lo, now a night of praise and peace.
The hope of the world is awake and strives :
The hollow heaven reverberates song—
Pregnant each hour of an old delight :
The sweet tradition, not dead but strong,
Burns in the blood of the world to-night.
What was the white now agleam in the green—
White not of lilies, red not of roses,
Where the wide-eyed pansies look up and stir
Under feet of a nymph that would not be seen,
Whom a half-leaved hedge as a veil discloses
Unto a faun that would follow her ?
Alas, but his feet are not swift enough to find
her,
Flying she flows as a wind in the wood,
Waking the flowers that he crushes behind
her,

Bowed down and weeping a severed sister-
hood,
Till her flight be afar and the sound of her
flying
Sound as the echo of his own voice
crying
Like a goat's on the hillside when a long day
is dying,
Till sighing he sits or weeps as he would.
But his grief is not grief that shall last beneath
the moon.
The stars shall be his comfort and the wind
be one with him :
He shall make of his sorrow a soft immortal
tune
Blown upon a reed when the daylight groweth
dim,

And remote from the seas that have strife for
heritage ;

The inland god is gentle with a wreath upon
his head,

And the mournful faun grows silent and his
grieving shall assuage

When a maiden, for his music, is more kind
than she that fled,

And a rose-like wonder wakes in a heart that
had no warning

Save the flute that fed her dreams at the falling
of the dew,

Till she found by night a vision that was truth
until the morning,

And the two grown one in darkness at the
dawn again were two.

Ah, the faun that loved a maiden, who shall
say the end of this ?

For the love that lasts the longest shall but see
the summer fall.

Ah, the faun, or yet the maiden, who was first
that would not kiss ?

Lo, they neither of them know it but the flute
shall say it all.

DEJANIRA.

Nymphs and ye nameless powers of night that
lurk

Songful or silent in forbidden bowers,

And wandering gods and gracious out of
heaven

Descended from what star or place of bliss

Where spring dwells and the everlasting rose

Hallowing the night with glory born thereof,
A perfume and strong power upon the spirit,
But sacred, a sweet secret and serene,
Known only of like eyes with mine that once
Had knowledge of a god since fled in fire—
I pray ye, be propitious to my hope.
The charity of Athens burdens me :
Mine exile weighs upon me : I am blind
With bitterness of grieving for my fate.
Let me but know the honour that I knew
Upon the land that bred me as a queen
At no time found unqueenly : lo, I ask
No more than what a plague does to no end,
Or the wild will of waters and quick fire
Or shaken sides of mountains stirred from
 peace
Unto no purpose, save a jest of death.

Avenge thou me upon these unjust men

That leave me naught save but the name of
queen,

A legend while I live and better dead

Being more honoured: abet now this my
curse—

Let death bedew their eyes with sudden sleep,

Plague, and the fear thereof afflict their house

And madness be upon them to destroy.

Smite, and have praise for ever. Wilt thou
not ?

No sign ? No star ? No light affirmative ?

No sky-born word of thy consenting thunder

Wrung from thee by fierce prayer of fiery
hope ?

Lo, then, my son shall take thy praise from thee,

O idle gods, unworthy of all worship :

Lo, now the hero Hyllus, what he is
Shining the portent of a torch by night,
A punishing fire of vengeance, nursed apart,
Elect unto great ends to change the world,
Standing a king by beauty and cold strength,
That with god-weary eyes regards the sea
Being made blind to fox-fires of the spirit
And feebler conflagrations of the flesh
By lofty counsel and high thoughts of fame,
Whose dedicated soul, aloof and tall,
Looks only to one end as I have said
Who did the world such honour, bearing
him.

PRIEST.

Why wilt thou change thy prayer to prophecy ?
Prayer and not prophecy best suits a woman.

DEJANIRA.

I am not woman nor a man, but more,
Being touched with godhead and the gift of
sight.

PRIEST.

The curse is wide and hurrying wings thereof
One with the night's wings cover up the world.

DEJANIRA.

What curse is this ? Now in the night no wings
Move, save a small lost bird's that seeks his rest.

PRIEST.

And yet I say it, and even age must weep
Seeing the extent of tears, the width of woe.

DEJANIRA.

Weep and have pity in thy feeble dreams

Regarding dead things and thy days flown by :
But we, with welcoming eyes raised up,
 and lips
Held ready to the wine-cup of our hope,
Wait with no prayer the coming of good things.

HYLLUS.

Mother, I charge thee feign some tears and
 weep.

Of over hopeful words the spite of God
Brings wailing and a bitter wind of tears.
Lo, the most sanguine of all them that sailed
Upon the black ship that bore us up and cleft
Waves that no eyes of Greeks had ever seen
Northward to dwindling light and newer stars,
Where uncouth people gave us of their gold—
He is that one who shall not speak to thee.

Yea, he that dreamed fair dreams of hope
fulfilled

(Whom yet I name not less mischance befall)

He is it who sees not what little good

Or great (it may be), that is born of time,

And the good will of gods, shall come to us,

The fruit of prayer : for hunting once, I say,

In a cold land of rock and windy pines

(Holding mysterious and sacred speech aloof),

With hunger for the master of the hunt,

We spied the great grey bull, the forest lord,

And sacred to the strong gods of the north,

The most dread beast wherewith no footmen
war,

Who lay beneath a tree and thought no ill.

But this god-maddened one, this one since
dead,

Bent then his futile bow, and with no prayer
Let slip the insult of his puny shaft
Against the dark hide of the drowsy death
Who leapt, and by no second shaft yet galled,
Upreared his slighted and indignant bulk,
And with dread eyes illumed, seeing him that
shot,
Charged, and the ground shook and he fled
with cries
Fruitless, unto forgotten gods, whom iron
horns
Tore, fallen, and hard hoofs of earth rock-shod
Crushed, and the fair man was become a spot
To turn our eyes from and with unsure feet
Win shipward as we might. Thus fate awakes
And follows with calamitous feet the soul
That dares bespeak its happiness of time,

And with no reverent doubt takes up the cup
Held in the steady hand of destiny
That with veiled eyes that burn beneath the
veil

Gives each the bitter and the sweet of it
Unto what end none knows : which being
thus,

O mother, thy strong prophecies of bliss
Make now the dim night darker to my soul.

PRIEST.

Oh, night of death, Oh, night of destiny !

DEJANIRA.

Surely the deeds of Heracles, thy sire,
Were helped with hope and some small con-
fidence.

HYLLUS.

Reverent doubt, though strong in the event
Walked by the side of a great heart in this.

DEJANIRA.

Thou hast a gloomy wisdom without hope.

HYLLUS.

Would God, would God the truth lay on thy
lips.

Hope beyond hope besets my soul and burns
With a blind fire all lesser dreams I knew
Once, in a common kinship with the world
Now love I know not, and no fiery fame
Lures from cold heights that are not heights
to me,

Nor summit that my soul can scale, whom now
The infinite possesses as a prey.

DRYADS.

The gods who fashioned man,
Who was it fashioned them ?
Who were the fates that span,
What ancient stratagem ?
I live, and on the grass
I see the spring awake.
I know but pains that pass,
Nor grieve for mine own sake.
Man weeps, and in his tears
He finds the face of God :
My heart but laughs and hears
And sees where satyrs trod.
Out of cool leaves that cover
His fervid face by night
One leaps to be my lover
With love that rose at sight.

How shall I weep for this,
Or wonder for a curse
While lips are yet to kiss,
Kind lips of his or hers ?
The moment is immortal,
Albeit the hour be bound
To pass the unlit portal
That leads to underground.
From vastitudes of night
One brings mine hour to me,
A little love and light
And songs from over-sea ;
A cup with wine in it,
A flower with dew thereon,
And wings of birds that flit—
All these I look upon.

I know not whence nor whither,
But these I feel are fair,
If they with love come hither,
I shall not see despair.

PRIEST.

Truly the gods are gods in many ways,
And these dim creatures without souls that
sing
Songs and then weep because the sky rains
tears
Partake not less of their beatitude,
Lacking foreknowledge and a memory.
But we cursed with a curse the most extreme
Which hath no fellow in divinity,
Or the malicious dreams of madder gods,
Being the utmost that can fall to earth—

The expectation and the fact of pain
Together with remembrances of death,
Which fate devised and set the snare thereof
To slay the dreams and happier hopes of men—
Yea, that same god that in an evil mind
Made joy with wings and sorrow with slow
steps

Passing upon the margin of fair streams
In meadows, and setting his feet therein, a seal
And token of his passage—broken flowers
And a sad rose disleaved : but joy, a bird
Having bright wings and quicker feet than
light,

Passing between the heaven and the earth
With scattered songs and stranger words of
peace,

And morning to make red the wings of him,

Stoops not unto a heavy-handed snare
And stays not longer resting save to breed
Some sadness for the instant flight of him
Out of the fallen bosom of a girl
With shadowy eyes of change and old regret
That shall not see nor feel by fainter moons
Delight of lips and answering of arms,
Nor any more the old faith in flowers dead.
These joy forsakes, but sorrow with large eyes
Regards them and rebukes the dreams they
had.

Whereat, maybe, they walk somewhere in fields
Of asphodel and that strange polion,
White leaved at dawn but purpled at the noon
And changed to blue at sunset : here they
walk
Alone now save with sorrow for a friend,

Thinking how death is doubtless strange and
hard

(Though the least thing is strange, being
thought upon),

And pondering on dreams now dead or changed
Till sick with seeking, lo, their aged eyes
Weep, and the grey dawn glimmers on a still-
born child.

DEJANIRA.

Truly the gods are garrulous in thee
If thou speak not thyself with no god's tongue.

PRIEST.

Out of the night and from mine age I speak.

HYLLUS.

How shall one rest with these things in the air
And hostile fires in sight across the straits ?

DEJANIRA.

Think'st thou the king will seek thee out to
slay

Who sits and quakes upon a shaking throne ?
Rather he waits, a sheep that smells a wolf,
Whose teeth shall end the terrors come of
them.

HYLLUS.

Yet are there fires and noises in the night
And on the waters moves a torch this way.

DEJANIRA.

The fishermen cast nets and fire the deep.

HYLLUS.

But what of flames upon the further hills
And noise of horses neighing, and their feet ?

DEJANIRA.

The land is wild and many things might be
And not the thing thou fearest by no chance.

HYLLUS.

I fear not aught, but yet would know of it.

DEJANIRA.

Abide the morning as thy men do now
Among the brakes with sweet unhuman loves,
Or sleep a warrior sleep, alone and stern.

HYLLUS.

Where is the maid Iole that I loved ?
Shall love not live in the desire of it ?

DEJANIRA.

Doubtless she sleeps, doubtless she is with
dreams
Holding dim counsel sweeter than clear day.

HYLLUS.

By my soul's eyes I see that she is dead,
And dim sweet hands drag at my soul, and
words

Call, and I hear them, and my flesh is moved
As with a wind from caverns : I am dead,
Yea, likewise dead, though for a little while
I see the waves that move beneath the moon ;
But ere the dawn I shall go down to her,
Drawn by strong love and the desire of death.

DEJANIRA.

What gift has come upon thee, O my son—
Art thou an evil prophet for thyself ?
Am I the erroneous woman that makes ill
Come of good words, and out of bad words,
good ?

And in the screaming whirlpool of this curse
Do I sink likewise with the wreck of hope ?
What is it that she says ? Of what import
The misty counsel that she gives thy heart ?
If now she love thee shall her soul not speak ?

PRIEST.

Woman, the gods have ordered it and thus
It shall be, though by chance it seem, strong
 love
Rend as with hands the veil dividing death
And the lit ways of life : yet shall it stand
And no man see beyond it save he die.

DRYADS.

Watching over human fate
I am grown afraid of late.
Now I see among the grasses

Where a bloody footstep passes.
Fate awakes and walks abroad :
My heart shakes, my heart is awed
Lest he turn and look my way—
Lest he turn and straightly say :
Be thou too as these shall be
Fallen out of memory,
With no word to say at morning,
Clear of scathe and safe from scorning,
Where no love shall light their feet
And no lover come to meet.
Let me not go down with these,
Goddess, to the surfless seas.
Aphrodite, singing mouths
Praise thee in the midst of drouths ;
Kissing lips a sacrifice
Offer to thy faultless eyes ;

.

Hands upon thy perfect knees
Clasped, implore with many pleas
All the grace thy beauty gives
To the least that looks and lives.
Songs and many supplications
Numberless and nameless nations
Offer up before thy feet
Heedless, without fault, and fleet
On the sea-foam, and more white
Than the wings of gulls that light
Touches when they turn in flight.
All that trembles, all that weeps,
Knows thee in a thousand sleeps.
Dreams assail the souls of these
Like strong wind from overseas.
From the towers called Tyrian
To the deserts where no man

Lives, and only serpents live,
All the blood is thine they give,
Sweet, to dip thy hands therein :
Fair and with no stain of sin.
Where thy worship thrives the most
All along the purple coast,
There the timbrels beat by night
For the feet of thy delight
Dancing in the dawn of moons
Redder for the sound of tunes
Sung until thy singers turn
Where thy furtive altars burn.
Ah, where now the shade is dimmer
Of thy temple, lo, they glimmer,
Girls that bare their breast to thee,
Shining for the bliss to be.
Ah, the might that lies on lips,

Touched with but thy finger tips.
Ah, the glory and the grace,
Like the morning of thy face.
Ah, thy neck that bears it up
Like a hand that holds a cup
Upright, till they pour the wine,
Darkling, of thy sacred vine.
Ah, thy hair a net of gold
Snaring the strong men of old.
The keen wonder of thine eyes
Lights the shrunken earth that lies
Like an apple in thy hand.
Queens and kings of either land
Kneel and own thee more than mighty
The strong goddess, Aphrodite.
Ah, they know thee and thy nights
On a bed of gold with lights

1

Shining from the shaken heights.
Thou hast magic, thou hast more
Strength than kings that overbore
Nations of the ancient earth.
Water bore thee at thy birth,
And I marvel how ye came
Moving as a conscious flame,
Moving as a flame at ease,
Strong to bear thine ecstasies.
Yea, I marvel, and my heart
Shakes to see thee what thou art.
Send not down to darkness yet
Me with these thy curses fret,
But let this my prayer ascend
Like a fire, unto this end,
Hanging with the holy seven
On the sacred heights of heaven.

PRIEST.

Now sound from sea-ward footsteps in the
night.

A heavy man comes hither, armed and strong.
Brass rings on brass as of a sword that swings.

DEJANIRA.

He stumbles with strong feet on a strange path.

HYLLUS.

He hath some burden that he bears with sighs.
Yea, as one burdened with bad news and blood,
Whose eyes know battle and whose ears,
pursuit
He comes like fate, he comes with news of
death.

DEJANIRA.

What burden can he bring out of the sea ?

HYLLUS.

What burden save the body of one dead ?

PRIEST.

Lo, where he comes and what it is he brings ?

DEJANIRA.

This is a giant of the elder earth.

Unsheath thy sword, O son, make strong thy
heart.

PRIEST.

What then is this white length and tender
corpse

He bears across his shoulder like a sack.

HYLLUS.

This is Iole that I said was dead,

Whose body follows now her summoning soul.

PRIEST.

She drips and sea-weed drapes her and smells
salt.

HYLLUS.

Wet from the waves one brings my love, my
bride.

DEJANIRA.

Alas, the Neriads lured her to her end,
Holding some sea-toy to her vain young eyes.

PRIEST.

Alas, not they, but Aphrodite did.

HYLLUS.

Maybe I did it, being one accursed.

PRIEST.

Alas, the curse ; now we lie under it.

F

HYLLUS.

This darkens night and makes the dawn far off.

PRIEST.

He lays her on the sward with reverence.

DEJANIRA.

Behold this man prepares his lips to speak.

ECHEMUS.

What is this corpse, and who are ye accursed ?

PRIEST.

O stranger, by thy reverence for the dead,
I know thee as one meet for priestly words.
I do not ask ye whence ye come, for naught
Afflicts my soul to ask ye this : nor strange
Is anything unto me who have seen
Emerge the dank locks of a dim sea-god

With eyes to watch me and a mouth to speak
That yet spake not : yet have I heard the gods
Conversing and conspiring, he and she,
And justice overborne of female spite,
Seeing a little thing change lives till fate
Seemed altered and courses of the steady stars
Though yet not changed seem changeable : lo,
this

Even I have seen with oreads who have fled
As birds before the fowler on four winds.
This have I seen, but piety shuts lips
Even more than oaths or bloody bonds of
death ;

Wherefore I may not say the heart of it
That yet am witness of a working curse—
The complot of two gods that met at eve,
At star-dawn ere the moon had sight of it,

And the eye-beam of hostile Artemis
Beheld not the deed done nor the sealed pact
Confirmed with but the kiss of coupling lust,
And born as child thereof this curse, I say ;
Whereof I know as one may see a wolf
Yet may not teach avoidance of its teeth,
Being bowless and with no spirit sword,
As of a prayer, to stay the feet of it,
Pursuing in no pause throughout the night
In a fierce patience the marked prey, with eyes
That shall not shut till dawn fulfils in blood
The thirst a certain goddess breeds therein
Whom yet I name not, neither warn the souls
That walk beneath this cloud and curse of her
The which pursues them beast-like to the end,
As I have said, who ask not thee thy name,
Lest to the extent of some impiety

Ye ask and I make answer as to this,
So standing in the night-time and with words
Stirring the silence and mystery of stars.

ECHEMUS.

Howbeit I bid ye tell of this drowned girl
Found on a rock by me, a warrior armed,
And borne by me towards lights upon this hill
And voices that I heard hold Grecian speech—
And in my ship are other men and strong
Likewise, and armed, whereof I am named
chief.

PRIEST.

This might I say and speak no sacrilege :
For as ye found it that now lies at peace
(I ask not how ye found it nor thy name)
Upon the dark grass and the sleepy flowers

Drooping dim heads beneath the dewy moon :
Yea, that lies now as any one of these
First fallen of that sisterhood, with eyes
Closed as with gentler fingers of faint sleep
That would awake as to some kiss and not,
Not the rough hand of waters wherewith death
Shut light from out them, leaving lids awake,
Saddening the stars with blindness when they
looked
(Which doubtless ye have closed with warrior
hands
Made tender for the nonce and holy too)
As mine and these curse-weary ones are sad
And as thine own are which have seen and
found,
And in no sacrilege, as I have said,
Are worthy to know well what ye behold,

Albeit her name were holier than it is
Which could not well be holier as I deem—
A votary of virgin Artemis,
Whom love hath slain, the very fire of fate,
Quenched now in waters by her will and deed,
Since death was less to her than to see love
Dead and grow dim in eyes once lit therewith :
For this was that Iole that now lies
Forlorn of all that made her what she was,
Save but the beauty that endures somehow
As a bird lingers by a nest despoiled
And lights her lips yet with a sea-born smile
At visions that attended on her end,
Whereto her mouth bears witness without
 sound
Whom late ye bore a burden from the sea,
Whose name ye know and likewise may behold,

And in beholding see a fallen star,
That with a brief light burned, a fragile
 flame,
Shedding a moment from immortal eyes
Upon the night of our mortality
Some light of love, a little taste of peace,
Till in the waiting darkness underneath,
Where Hades holds his cold serenity,
She fell with faint reluctance and few tears
(Not knowing death save only as a friend),
Leaving the major grief where she is not
When morning, nor the sun that sees all
 things
Shall know her, nor the stars, nor any wind
Again her garments, nor the flowers her feet,
Nor love come near her for whose face she
 died.

DRYADS.

Truly the gods are at odds with men.
What had this girl done to drown alone ?
O heroes and gods will ye hear it again—
Will ye be more hard than thine image in
stone ?

For I knew her fair whom I see as dead,
Slain by the sea and a crueller god.
Now I am blind till the world seems red,
For I, too, tread where the dead have trod
Wherefore judge not : withhold thy wrath ;
Ye have not done well—though ye make my
path

End in a pit, yet my lips have said
Nor abate one sigh for thy scorn or scathe.
Yet what shall avail a word for this ?
All is gone over and no more to do,

And death is the judge between ye two.
O thou sad god who hast done this thing,
Were ye one or many ? O Artemis
Ye were not one for the maid was swift
Loving the light and the open ways
Where the free wind plays
With eyes to see and lips to sing,
Kissable ever but not to kiss.
Ye would not give her cold death as a gift
Who was warm and sweet and pure in thy
 praise,
A blown white bud, a fragrance of old
Born of dead youth and those wings of his
Ere sorrow arose and blood was shed.
Nay, thou art cold but thou art not cruel
Yet I know one well, afire and cold
Nor any shall name her for what she is :

But I know the blossom that crowns her head,
Yea and I know her gifts that are dual
Which I name not now lest they come at call—
Lest I know her as men whom her lips misled
For all men know her and she knoweth all.
She buildeth a fire and blood for fuel
Burneth as oil in a lamp for the dead.
But I wonder at peace, I dream not of death
Though I mourn one dead and weep with eyes
Momently sad as saddening skies
Cover the world
Grey with old grief, bitter with breath
Autumn breaths from a heart burned out,
Cold and old and dim with doubt
When the whole world's hope is hurled
Across the ashes of fallen summer,
With songs cut short and lips grown dumber

For sweet things said in ears since dead
Even as hers whose fallen head
I hail and fain would kiss
And weep for this
Whose fate has overcome her.

HYLLUS.

Madness and death, are they not gifts of her
The obscure goddess that ye will not name ?

DEJANIRA.

Why wilt thou name and bring upon thy head
These winged ones with brazen beaks, and
eyes
Burning unquenchable to kill thy soul.

HYLLUS.

Are they not both upon me armed and strong ?

What wouldst thou more ? Shall a supremer
ill

Afflict me than to see my dead come back
Smiling, whose living eyes I closed by tears ?

DEJANIRA.

Truly she smiles who was not wont to smile
And laughed not for one year but watched
the sea.

PRIEST.

O fatal dreams out of the dangerous sea !

ECHEMUS.

Shall it be sacrilege to kiss the dead ?

HYLLUS.

Refrain thy lips : take off thine eyes from
her.

HYLLUS

ECHEMUS.

Thou art, then, Hyllus, if ye speak like this.

HYLLUS.

I am that man : hast thou a word for him ?

ECHEMUS.

I come from king Eurystheus bearing death.

HYLLUS.

Yea, truly ye bore death a while ago.

O thou night-bearer of the precious dead,

How came ye by this corpse ? Where found
ye it ?

ECHEMUS.

As I have said : I take no blame for this.

HYLLUS.

Tell me that thou didst slay her out of love.

PRIEST.

Nay, for that god by her own deed she died.

HYLLUS.

Tell me she fell by fate for no man's fault.

PRIEST.

This is a question, this cries out and weeps.

HYLLUS.

Tell me some falsehood that I shall believe.

DEJANIRA.

Why wilt thou wince to bear a little blood ?

What of thy wars and redder piracies ?

Are they so little, then, against this life

That thou must needs go mad and ruin all

Because the sea hath followed fate in this

And done what she would do because of thee ?

What was she living ? Didst thou ever kiss
Or clasp in life what now ye wail in death
With warrior eyes and words that fly at fate,
Holding a slight corpse more than destiny
Or the career of nations ? Her dimmed eyes—
Are they more than a people's blighted hope
Or lips ye kissed not more than battles won
That thou wilt rust with weeping thy sword's
edge.

HYLLUS.

Woman, thy words have done it. Now complete
The curse stands that conducts me to mine
end.

Had I but known and done what I did not
Death had not been nor yet the fruits of death
Bitter to taste of that my lips now taste

Unto the core where hides my proper end
In poison of these thoughts I can but think
Seeing the sad length of my one-time love
Laid by rough hands, though reverent, dead
on earth

Amid dark grass and shining flowers between,
A sea-spoil more than much long-sunken gold
Or grace of any nereid snared with nets ;
And likewise it is bitter but to think
How other feet have found her, other hands
Held, and felt now the fallen weight of her
Whom living none had known save but to
greet,

Save I that kissed once and no more again :
Whence comes the keenest shaft of these
wherewith

I am afflicted with no word to help

Nor any shield to keep me clean of hurt
Of these so levelled arrows, thought by
thought,
Flying and fledged with feathers of night's
wings
And lesser wings of evil plumed and dark.
Likewise I think now of those men I slew
Sleeping, and spoiled their camp amidst them
dead ;
Also the ship I came to as a friend
And left it burning even as I burn now
With these my visions and visible dreams of
death.
And ill deeds done for pitiless lust of praise
Out of a high heart and a blind soul banned.
Alas, but these are nothing, these are less
Than the light foam upon the whelming wave

That makes my chiefest sorrow, where my
soul

Drowns with no hand to hold it, for I know
I am accursed in truth more than most men
To whom no lure of honour nor glint of gold
Nor any love save only love since dead
Are potent to make life a worthy thing—
Whom now a vision plagues with pallid lip
And hands that plead not vainly to my soul
Straining the bonds of slight mortality
Till that I see her as a cloudy light,
A flame unquenchable of any sea
Beside her body at the head of it
Holy and unbeheld by eyes save mine,
For ye, ye cannot see her how she moves
Since unto me she makes such mystic court
Even as once whereas I would not see

U o r M

And put away the vision as a vain thing
Ere yet the night was born when I should
weep.

Alas, O ghost, O summoning soul that shines
A torch that I would take unto my hand
And go to where thou ledest underground
Or to what height of undiscovered heaven
Where stars faint and the flaming eyes of
gods

Fail, and no other light were save but thee !
Shall I have any knowledge of thy lips
Or see thine eyes if I, upon this sword,
Fall and bleed out my life across thy corpse
Lying a mask disused, while now thy face
Shines as a flame above thy body dead ?
Lo now thy soul beseeches with stretched
hands !

HYLLUS

Do I not see it ? Thus thou didst in life
Ere that thy death gave body to my dream
Which once thou wert, which now thou art
again

Still gracious and compelling as with peace
My soul unto thee strongly by thine eyes
Whom now the noise of waters in mine ears
Troubles, and hope unknowable makes mad.
Now by thy face I know thou hast found
peace,

Yea, by thine eyes I know ye promise it
And by the light about thee, by thy soul
Unquenchable in waves or futile foam
I feel the tide that draws me and a wind
That pushes to the ending of my dream.
For in all dreams there is a time to end
Wherein they shall be tested as with fire,

Confirmed or else found false : behold, this
night

That draws toward death by steady feet of
stars

And risen wind around the robes thereof

Blowing one way with sweet prophetic scents

As of a new day and a song resumed—

Warns of a dawn whose eyes shall look on
blood

As now mine eyes behold it, set apart,

Out of the regular wheel and turn of things

Watching, a god by reason of my dream

Whereon my soul rides to what end it would

Borne by one only wind out of the world

Unto the one test of a certain death,

Since I can no more live and face thy words

O woman, O my mother who hast judged

And laid this blood upon me, which to thee
Is notight because of Heracles thy god
Who stands avenged now of mistaken death
(Alas the long pangs of that hard-lit pyre)
And out of heaven regards thee with glad
eyes :

But unto me comes likewise death of this
For by the curse laid on me I must seek
Some shadowy hand of pardon and go plead
With soundless speech in Hades for my peace
Even at the feet of her who asked on earth
For but the once unbending of my brows
Whereto my whole soul turns now as a wind,
Whereto my blood goes out as he that runs
To welcome one beloved : I will die,
I will have done with questionings of fate
And for the need of pardon from one dead

I will walk now the purple meadows dim
Lit with unearthly fire and sunless flame
Where feet fall soundless under songless trees
And horses of the dark king pause and graze,
Atoning as a shadow for my fault
And as a spirit seek the end of this
Where dead folk dream and bitterly ponder
fate,
Sin, and the lost sun's sweetness : but where I,
Regretting nothing and not sad at all
Albeit subdued to semblance of all these
(These graceless ghosts and companies unled)
Walk with a separate fire to warm my soul
And shadowy hand in hand with her explore
The dim house and the home of all the dead
Where no dawn is and all to-morrows end,
And all the pale flocks of the underworld

Await not any hour to bring them joy
Nor any new grief out of all that are,
Enduring what they died in or regret
Love or lost honour or a meed of gold,
Not greatly but yet sadly as ones spent
Futile, and without strength of sighs or rage
Abiding windless of all airs they knew
Whereof there are not any who shall sing
Wherein I only of all these shall smile.

DRYADS.

Shall a soul be born unto me out of pain
And from trouble a human heart ?
Shall the shadow of sorrow remain
Though his presence depart ?
O goddess who metes unto us all our morrows
Wilt thou send this curse upon me,

Till I beholding these many sorrows

Shall weep tears like the sea ?—

Tears that shall furrow as with iron my face

As one plougheth a pleasant land

Till I change and am one with the race

Who have horror at hand,

Who have terror that lasts and outlives the
dawn

For the coming again of night,

Yea remembrance of evils long gone

Re-arisen to sight

As the ghost of dead graces they knew of all

Who were girls and ready to love,

Who are gone leaving memory to gall

The old lovers thereof.

Behold I have seen how man weeps for the past,

For the future and also sin,

Because of a soul that shall last

And a spirit within.

Yea to-night I have terror at heart and fear

Lest I know and see how this is

And regret for old love shall draw near

And old kisses of his.

O strong goddess, let fire be upon the sea,

Of the sky break thou the great bowl

But set not this curse upon me

The sad curse of a soul.

ECHERMUS.

I come from king Eurystheus bearing death

But yet the dead I bore, that fallen flower

Despoiled now at the hands of gods unjust

And by thy deed who hast forbid to kiss

O Hyllus, what all reverence had else restrained,

Is not the one death that I mean by this.
For the old king Eurystheus at his wine
Turns ever to the north a fear-shot eye
And cries the name of Hyllus in his sleep
And sweats to know thou art a living man :
Whence hath he sent me forth to find and slay
The one disturber of his dreams that stands
Each night beside his bed with a bare sword
Albeit his queen sees naught but wakes to hear
The protest of his lips and dream-struck throat
Whence to this end I thus accost thee now
Whereto I am made ready, by the gods.

HYLLUS.

Art thou come singly or with other wolves ?

ECHEMUS.

I have a boat with men beside thy ship :

Likewise across the bay mine army lies
That rest upon their spears till I come back
Who seeing the shining of fires and hearing
 song
Urged by some god, have come to find thee out
With some few fellows strong of hand and
 heart.

HYLLUS.

I might call out now and each bush give birth
Unto an armed man stronger than thou art.

ECHEMUS.

Thy spearmen sleep the heaviest sleep of night
For now the stars wane and all life burns low.
They have forgotten thee and will not stir,
And dawn shall find them with strange loves
 asleep

Though now thy blood be forfeit to my sword
And in my hand I bear thy head away
O Hyllus, for I hate thee for thy deeds ;
Nor is there any man more strong than I
Among thy men and if thou be that man
Yet by the hate I bear thee, I prevail.

DEJANIRA.

O son, this truly is a wolf-like word
Forth of a dog's mouth that cries out for death.

PRIEST.

This word is war, and blood shall come thereof.

HYLLUS.

Whence comes this windy hate upon thy soul ?

ECHEMUS.

Who is she dead ? and how is it she died ?

HYLLUS.

Hath one not told thee this, a priest and
old ?

ECHEMUS.

Thou knowest this, thou hast the heart of it.

HYLLUS.

I know it as a horror close at heart.

ECHEMUS.

If thou wert I, death had not won in this.

HYLLUS.

Maybe, thou too hadst been as one accursed.

ECHEMUS.

Outcast of gods and men, bend now thy
neck.

PRIEST.

He shakes his shield and strikes it with his
sword.

ECHEMUS.

Yield up thy head, make strong thy heart to
die.

HYLLUS.

This truly is a weary night that bears
Such heavy fruit : I would the waiting dawn,
That knows not what it waits for, would come
forth,
Dispelling, by true presence and eye-beams,
And with swift hands and fingers as of flame,
Doubt and the death-born things of hate.
O dawn, desired above all other dreams,
Let now thine eyelids open towards my soul,

And freshening airs of flower-soft raiment
stirred

Brush now my face as once her breathing did
Whom seeming death hath taken : now mine
eyes

Are hungry, and mine inner heart athirst
Desires such waters as no earthly spring
Hath power to bear to quench it : wherefore
thou,

O maiden dawn, come now in guise of her
Whom night hath stolen darkly : come like
her,

Or come thou with her or come not at all.
Else what shall dawn be more than night is
now,

If this be ordered by some god not thus ;
For she being dead is now my dawn whom once

H

I could not see to worship, but whom now
If dawn awakes not then is dawn like night,
Fulfilled with visions of no worth and harsh
With hateful voices and threatening shapes
 of war,
And divers cries and counter-cries adrift
Like startled wings of birds a strange light
 scares
Or eyes that hunt in shadows : now my brain
Rings with the clamour of all these like
 waves
In windy darkness with the stars blown out,
And to my soul a proud voice crieth now :
“ Lo, the dark way that I go forth to light ! ”

PRIEST.

A god hath maddened him : he, too, will die.

HYLLUS.

Yea, for the trust of dawn that may not come.

DEJANIRA.

What blight hath come upon thee, O my
son ?

What adverse god is this ? Do I not know
That I should ask of thee for sight of her ?
And what of me, thy mother ? Oh, that I,
Yea, even I, god-loved, had died ere this—
That the hard hand of Heracles had shook,
Yea, even the hand that sped the shaft what
time

Adrift upon the foaming Centaur's back,
In full mid-stream, I heard the missile pass
That pierced beneath the shoulders of my
steed,
H*

Mixing dark blood with foam of plunging
strength

That failed upon the shore and died and left
The gift that slew his slayer. O thou my god,
I would thy hand had trembled and thy shaft,
Flown thwartwise, had found out my heart
instead ;

For I beheld thee ruined, and now thy son
Must I behold and ruin more than this—
My ruin, and the shock of halted time,
Changed lives and destiny set back, yea, now,
The years fall edgewise amid days confused,
And fate hath a new face unto all men
And nations unarisen : yet wherefore
I know not but suspect a curse in this,
The curse of one more strong than mortal—nay,
By no mere chance of fate this falls on thee :

Some hand hath shaped this shaft and bent
the bow,

And no blind eye, but keen, hath sent thee this.

And now behold another out of night,

Another curse out of the night and sea,

Come up with heavy feet and steady eyes,

A visible curse that speaks and shakes a sword

And looks with hate upon thy madness—son,

This is the end—farewell—I will not see,

I will not look upon thee to thy fall.

We cannot stand against this : gods adverse

Conspire : the word goes forth—even thou

hast said

And judged thyself in madness. Was it I

That called this curse upon thee ? Who had

known

Of too much hope came ruin and this night

With terrible eyes to strike thee mad : behold
This warrior comes : now I will hide my
face.

ECHEMUS.

Now will I take thy head and go my ways.

PRIEST.

He walks towards thy son who sees him not.

DEJANIRA.

Oh, that the hand of Heracles had shook !

PRIEST.

He has smitten and thy son falls without
speech.

DEJANIRA.

I did not see it for mine eyes are closed.

PRIEST.

And with short strokes deprives him of his
head.

DEJANIRA.

Oh, that I too with Heracles had burned !

PRIEST.

And stands now and regards the work he did.

DEJANIRA.

I have no tears, but fire besets mine eyes.

PRIEST.

He bears the head of Hyllus in his hand.

DEJANIRA.

Wilt thou say more ? Is any more to do ?

PRIEST.

He looks upon Iole and sheds tears.

DEJANIRA.

What comfort shall I have who cannot weep ?

PRIEST.

Now he goes down the sea-path whence he
came.

DEJANIRA.

I now must die before mine eyes unclose.

PRIEST.

She hath set a dagger to her heart and dies
To whom there was naught left more fit than
this,
Seeing that age came unto her unstayed
And fortune turned a light face elsewhere

That left no token of return in any spring,
But in the night departed and took flight
And left the dawn to look upon these dead,
With me the witness and the judge of it—
The night's work of a curse turned loose to
range

In ravin, without pity. Now I see
The headless length of Hyllus, and one drowned,
And one self-slain, a triple death and sad,
Whereat I too would weep if tears could help
As now these dryads weep such simple tears
As fall on leaves in April : I am old ;
I have seen many springs set fire to earth,
And sweet succeeding sweet with sigh on sigh
Who yet call death a friend : but unto youth
Death ever is the night-time of the world
The cloudy shepherd with unwelcome feet

Folding the flocks that yet would feed a
while

And closing eyes not ready yet to sleep.

And as to this Iole I have said

All one might say who weeps not : yet for
him,

The fallen hero born to win a world,

Doubtless he hath the one desire he would,

Or if not that, then no desire at all,

And which is best I know not : I am old,

Mine eyes have looked on many battles lost

And prayers that lacked fulfilment of a word

That failed of utterance : now a three-fold
death

I must behold and in the sight thereof

I would the end were well of all this grief—

Some spiritual balm at hands of lenient gods ;

Which may be for we know not : now I see
A red and windy morning spreading wings
And in much sorrow and some hope I go.

DRYADS.

When the dawn appears
Like a prophecy
Or a glint of spears
Or a fire at sea ;
Like the flush of a girl
Whom one tells of desire,
Or the shining of pearl
That adorns a lyre,
Or a warrior red
From a terrible fight,
Or the ghost of one dead
Re-arisen in light—

Lo, one shall be glad
In fulfilment of prayer,
And another be sad
And confirmed in despair.

THE END

